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ADDRESS  
OF  
PRESIDENT WILSON

TO THE  
ASSOCIATED ADVERTISING CLUBS  
PHILADELPHIA, PA.

JUNE 29, 1916



WASHINGTON

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ADDRESS TO THE ASSOCIATED ADVERTISING CLUBS, PHILADELPHIA,  
PA., JUNE 29, 1916.

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MR. PRESIDENT, GENTLEMEN OF THE ASSOCIATED ADVERTISING CLUBS,  
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

You will understand that I have not come here to make an extended address. I do not need to explain to you the circumstances which have made it impossible that I should prepare an extended address, but I count myself very fortunate to be able to leave my duties at Washington long enough to face this interesting company of men who have the very fine conception that it is their duty to lift the standards and ideals of their profession.

I understand, gentlemen, that you have associated yourselves together in order to promote candor and truth in the advertisement of your business. I wish very much, gentlemen, that candor and truth might always be the standard of politics as well as the standard of business. I want to challenge your attention for a moment to this aspect of your activities. I do not see how a man can devote himself to candor and truth in the promotion of a particular business without studying the life of the great nation to whom he addresses his advertising. I do not see how a man can fail, having established the horizon of his business where the great hills of truth lie, to lift his eyes to the great multitude of laboring men and striving women who constitute a great nation like ours, and in the very act of addressing them get in his own consciousness some part of the impulse of their life. You can not commend your business to people that you do not understand, and you can not understand the people of the United States without wishing to serve them.

So I come to you with this thought: America is at a point, gentlemen, where it is more than ever necessary that she should understand her own ideals not only, but be ready to put them into action at any cost. It is one thing to entertain fine principles and another thing to make them work. It is one thing to entertain them in the formulæ of words like the splendid words which were uttered and gave distinction to this ancient and historic building behind me, but it is another thing to do what those same men did, make those words live in the



action of their lives. And America is summoned in each new generation to renew not only the pledges that those men made, but to renew the example which they gave to the world.

I am not interested, and I beg that you will believe me when I say that I never have been interested, in fighting for myself, but I am immensely interested in fighting for the things that I believe in, and so far as they are concerned I am a challenger to all comers. It is important, therefore, since I am in fighting mood, to let you know what are some of the things that I do believe in.

In the first place, I believe, and I summon you to show your belief in the same thing, that it is the duty of every American in everything that he does, in his business and out of it, to think first, not of himself or of any interest which he may be called upon to sacrifice, but of the country which we serve. "America first" means nothing until you translate it into what you do. So I believe most profoundly in the duty of every American to exalt the national consciousness by purifying his own motives and exhibiting his own devotion.

I believe, in the second place, that America, the country that we put first in our thoughts, should be ready in every point of policy and of action to vindicate at whatever cost the principles of liberty, of justice, and of humanity to which we have been devoted from the first. [Cheers.] You cheer the sentiment, but do you realize what it means? It means that you have not only got to be just to your fellow men, but that as a nation you have got to be just to other nations. It comes high. It is not an easy thing to do. It is easy to think first of the material interest of America, but it is not easy to think first of what America, if she loves justice, ought to do in the field of international affairs. I believe that at whatever cost America should be just to other peoples and treat other peoples as she demands that they should treat her. She has a right to demand that they treat her with justice and respect, and she has a right to insist that they treat her in that fashion, but she can not with dignity or with self-respect insist upon that unless she is willing to act in the same fashion toward them. That I am ready to fight for at any cost to myself.

Then, in the third place, touching ourselves more intimately, my fellow citizens, this is what I believe: If I understand the life of America, the central principle of it is this, that no small body of persons, no matter how influential, shall be trusted to determine the policy and development of America. You know what you want in your business. You want a fair field and no favor. You want to be given the same opportunity that other men have, not only to make known what you have to sell, but to sell it under as favorable conditions as anybody else. The principle of the life of America

is that she draws her vitality, not from small bodies of men who may wish to assume the responsibility of guiding and controlling her, but from the great body of thinking and toiling and planning men from whom she draws her energy and vitality as a nation. I believe, and this is the reason I am a Democrat, not merely with a big "D" but with a little "d"—I am all kinds of a democrat, so far as I can discover—but the root of the whole business is this, that I believe in the patriotism and energy and initiative of the average man. Some men say they believe in it, but when they act, they show that they do not. They show that they think the only advice that it is safe to take is their advice. [Voice in crowd: "Oh, you Teddy!"]

I was not referring to any individual, but I could give you an interesting and a very short list of a group of individuals who have that opinion, namely, that it is not safe for the United States to escape from their control. I feel perfectly safe in the hands of the average body of my fellow citizens. You are bound to feel safe in their hands. If they do not believe in you, you can not sell anything. If they do not believe in you, you can not conduct your business. Your vitality comes from them to you; it does not go from you to them. The theory of government which I decline to subscribe to is that the vitality of the nation comes out of closeted councils where a few men determine the policy of the country.

So, gentlemen, I feel at home in this company, not because I advertise, but because I have got principles that I am perfectly willing to expose to the public view, and because I want to express my sympathy with, not only, but my admiration for a body of men who think it is worth while to get together in order to tell the truth. The only thing that ever set any man free, the only thing that ever set any nation free, is the truth. A man that is afraid of the truth is afraid of the law of life. A man that does not love the truth is in the way of decay and of failure, and I believe that if you will just let the vitality that is in you and the enthusiasm that is in you run beyond the confines of the businesses that you may be interested in, you will presently feel that infinite reward, as if the red blood of a whole nation came surging back into your own veins.

Can you imagine, my fellow countrymen, a more inspiring thing than to belong to a free nation and make your way among men everyone of whom has the right and the opportunity to say what he thinks. Criticism does not hurt anybody. I heard an old politician once say to his son, "John, don't bother your head about lies and slanders; they will take care of themselves, but if you ever hear me denying anything, you may make up your mind that it is so." When you see a man wincing under criticism, you may know that something hit him that was so. And, therefore, when they are saying the

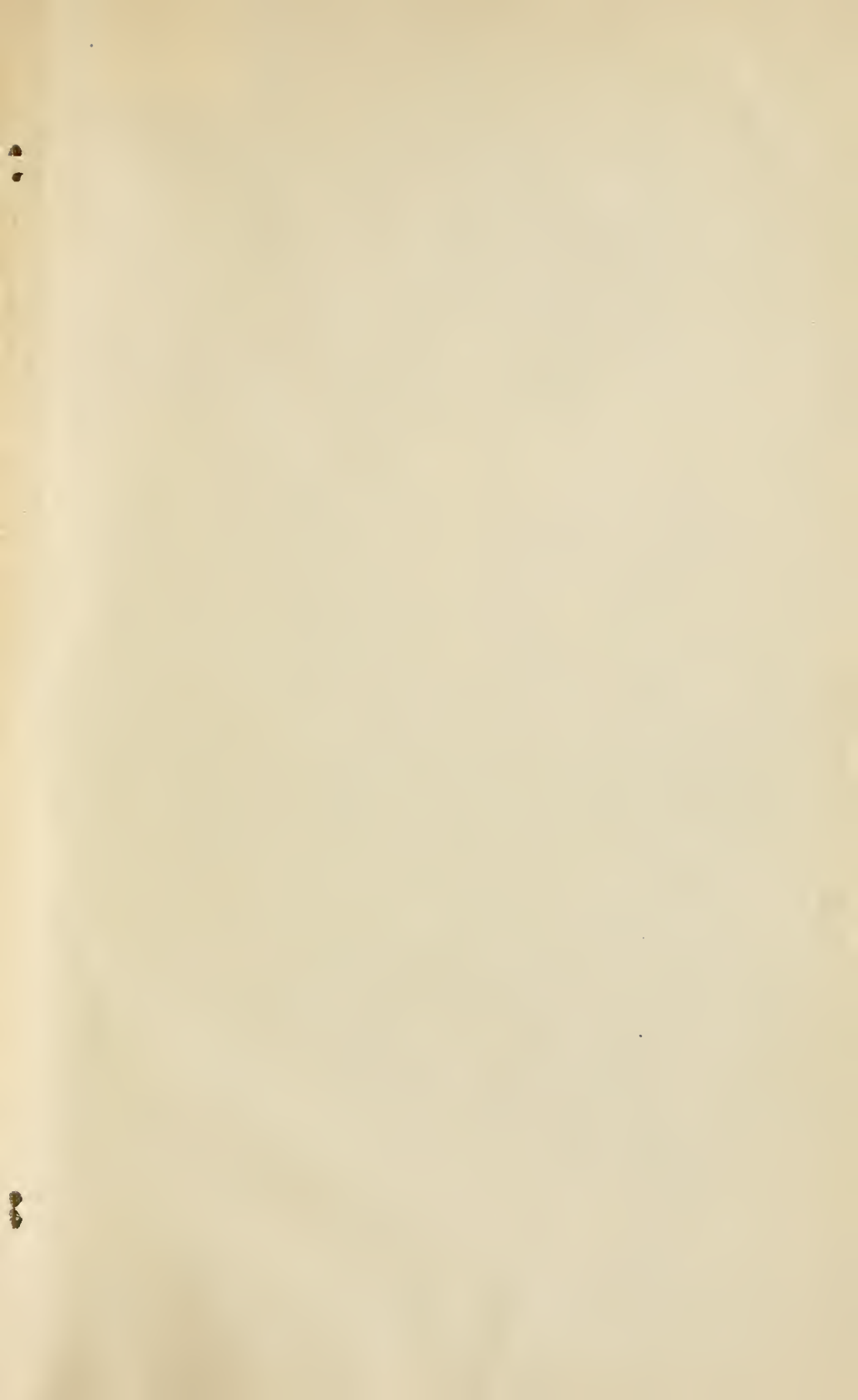
things that are not true, there is no credit in keeping your head and not minding it. I have such an inveterate confidence in the ultimate triumph of the truth that I feel, with old Doctor Oliver Wendell Holmes, that the truth is no invalid, and you need not mind how roughly you handle her. She has got a splendid constitution and she will survive every trial and every labor.

I have come, therefore, as I have abundantly shown you, not to make a formal speech—if I could show you some of the things I have been obliged to do before I came here, you would know that I could not possibly make up a speech—but merely to show my profound interest in a body of men who are not only devoted to business but devoted to ideals. Business is all right so long as it is not sordid, and it cannot be sordid if it is shot through with ideals. A man, no matter how humble his business, can hold his head up among the princes of the world if, as they ought to do, he will think of himself as the servant of the people and not as their master, as one who would serve and not as one who would govern.

I congratulate you, my fellow citizens, upon the ideals of a profession which can lower or exalt business, as you choose, and which you have chosen to employ for its exaltation. I came away from Washington to look into your faces and get some of the enthusiasm which I always get when I come away from officialdom and touch hand to hand with great bodies of the free American people.









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